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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIE-00 DODE-00 IGA-02 AGRE-00
DHA-02 OES-06 PRS-01 L-03 H-01 PM-04 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-08 NSC-05 TRSE-00
SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03
INR-07 NSAE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 /091 W
----------031748Z 045258 /41
O 031702Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4537

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 1187

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652 GDS
TAGS: EAID, SWEL, HA
SUBJECT: HAITI'S ECONOMIC DISTRESS AND PROPOSED REMEDIAL MEASURES

REF: (A) PORT AU PRINCE 0972, (B) STATE 069954, (C) PORT AU PRINCE
1129, (D) PORT AU PRINCE 1185

1. SUMMARY. HAITI'S SEVERE ECONOMIC PLIGHT, BROUGHT ON BY A PRO-
LONGED DROUGHT AND CHARACTERIZED BY SHORTAGES OF ELECTRICITY, WATER,
AND FOOD, CALLS, IN MY JUDGMENT, FOR A PROMPT AND APPROPRIATE
U.S. RESPONSE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF OUR DISASTER RELIEF OPERATIONS
BUT NOT LIMITED THERETO. THIS MESSAGE OUTLINES THE RELEVANT FACTORS
BEARING ON U.S. HUMANITARIAN INTERESTS IN HAITI AND RECOMMENDS A
SET OF SHORT AND LONGER TERM MEASURES. END SUMMARY.

2. IN THIS DENSELY POPULATED AND DRAMATICALLY IMPOVERISHED
CARIBBEAN NATION, SPRING HAS BROUGHT A TRAIN OF TROUBLES, THE
PERSISTENT DROUGHT, FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT YEAR, HAS REDUCED PELIGRE
RESERVOIR TO THE POINT THAT BOTH POWER FOR PORT AU PRINCE AND
IRRIGATION FOR FERTILE ARTIBONITE VALLEY ARE SERIOUSLY JEOPARDIZED
(REF A). SHORTAGE OF WATER, COMBINED WITH PERSISTENT DEFICIENCIES OF
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ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, HAS IN TURN PRODUCED SHORTAGE OF BASIC
FOODS INCLUDING CORN, RICE, BEANS, AS DESCRIBED REF C. IN THIS
CONTEXT, DEPARTMENT'S CONCLUSION (REF B) THAT DISASTER RELIEF
FUNDS CANNOT BE USED TO PROVIDE PORT AU PRINCE WITH 3 MW EQUIVALENT
OF TEMPORARY GENERATORS, AND THE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL THAT GOH
REIMBURSE ALMOST $200,000 FOR COSTS OF TRANSPORTATION, PER DIEM,
AND THE LIKE FOR USE OF 3 MW FOR 30 DAYS, WILL COME AS A DISTINCT

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DISAPPOINTMENT TO HAITIAN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC.

3. MINISTER BAYARD, WHEN I CONVEYED NEWS, SHOWED HIS CHAGRIN, ALTHOUGH HE UNDERSTOOD PROBLEM, AND POINTED OUT THAT WHILE GOH HAD FROM OUTSET EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO REIMBURSE $50,000 -- THE ESTIMATED COST WE HAD RECEIVED FROM ARMY ENGINEERS -- IT WAS UNLIKELY TO PAY $200,000 GIVEN FACT THAT COST OF BUYING 1 MW GENERATOR NEW WAS IN $120,000 RANGE. HE PROMISED TO LET US KNOW GOH REACTION, BUT I HAVE NO DOUBT IT WILL BE NEGATIVE.

4. U.S. RESPONSE TO HAITI'S PROBLEMS HAS BUILT UP GOOD WILL HERE -- FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1973, THE NAVY'S FIRE FIGHTING SPECIALISTS FROM GUANTANAMO EXTINGUISHED A STUBBORN AMMUNITION FIRE IN THE NATIONAL PALACE, AND OUR HELP IN 1975 NORTHWEST FAMINE AVERTED WIDESPREAD DEATHS. EXPECTATIONS THEREFORE ARE HIGH FOR SOME USG HELP. MY HELICOPTER INSPECTION TRIP OF PELIGRE WAS HEADLINED IN NEXT MORNING'S PRESS, AS IF SOME MIRACLE COULD REVERSE A DECADE OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND TWO YEARS OF INSUFFICIENT RAINFALL.

5. ATTENTION TO OUR RESPONSE, THESE DAYS, IS PARTICULARY INTENSE BECAUSE HAITIANS HAVE LOST A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT (FOR ITS FAILURE TO PLAN AHEAD AND SLOWNESS IN TAKING PREVENTIVE MEASURES), AND SOME SEE PRESENT CONJUNCTION OF EVENTS AS CONDUCIVE TO THE KIND OF STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN REGIME THEY HAVE LONG SOUGHT, GOING AS FAR AS REPLACING PRESIDENT DUVALIER. JEUNE PRESSE THIS WEEK REFERS TO RUMORS THAT RECENT CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS (RODINO, RANGEL, BROOKE) URGED DUVALIER TO HOLD PROMPT ELECTIONS OR RISK LOSING ECONOMIC AID. ABSURD AS SUCH RUMORS ARE, MANY HAITIANS ARE READY TO BELIEVE THEM IN PRESENT MOOD OF UNCERTAINTY AND MALAISE.
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6. IF, AS CANADIAN CHARGE TELLS ME IT PLANS TO DO, CANADIAN GOVERNMENT PROVIDES GOH WITH 4 750 KW GENERATORS, ON GENEROUS TERMS TO BE NEGOTIATED LATER, PUBLIC WILL INEVITABLY CONTRAST CANADIAN GENEROSITY WITH U.S. CONDITIONAL OFFER. HOWEVER, IF WE COULD MATCH CANADIAN GESTURE, THE COMBINED 6 MW WOULD MAKE IMPRESSIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SOLVING POWER SHORTAGE. CANADIANS HAVE FROM OUTSET EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO ACT IN CONCERT.

7. TAKING ALL THESE FACTORS INTO ACCOUNT, I BELIEVE WE NEED TO TAKE SOME POSITIVE ACTION RELATED BOTH TO THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS AND TO THE LONGER TERM REQUIREMENTS. I PROPOSE THAT:

A. NEGATIVE DECISION ON GENERATORS BE REVIEWED WITH A VIEW TO FINDING SOME SOLUTION WHICH, PARALLEL TO CANADIAN ACTION, COULD MEET URGENT SHORT TERM NEEDS ON TERMS THAT WOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN THOSE COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE.

B. OUR RECOMMENDATION FOR A SUPPLEMENTARY PL-480 TITLE I PROGRAM

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(10,000 TONS OF CORN, 10,000 TONS OF RICE) BE APPROVED PROMPTLY
(REF C).

C. OUR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL SHIPMENT OF EMERGENCY FOOD FOR NORTH-
WEST FAMINE RELIEF BE APPROVED PROMPTLY (REF D).

D. AID EXPLORE WITH IDB AND WORLD BANK, BOTH ENGAGED IN POWER AND
IRRIGATION SECTORS, IDEA OF DESPATCHING SPECIAL TASK FORCE OF EXPERTS
,
INCLUDING THOSE FROM CANADIAN GOVERNMENT AND CORPS OF ENGINEERS,
TO SURVEY PELIGRE AND, DRAWING ON DATA ALREADY COLLECTED BY
CANADIANS, SUBMIT PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR INTERNATIONALLY
FINANCED DESILTING, EROSION CONTROL, AND WATERSHED PROTECTION PRO-
JECT. ALTHOUGH PELIGRE PROJECT IS LONG TERM, I BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT
TO SHOW THAT OUR EMERGENCY MEASURES ARE ACCOMPANIED BY PROMPT ACTION
ON THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS, FOR SOLUTION OF WHICH STRONG HAITIAN
COMMITMENT WILL BE ESSENTIAL.
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8. THESE STEPS, IF THEY COULD BE MADE KNOWN TO GOH WITHOUT DELAY
AND AS AN INTERRELATED SET OF MEASURES, WOULD HAVE A MOST
BENEFICIAL EFFECT GENERALLY, REAFFIRM OUR CONTINUING HUMANITARIAN
INTEREST IN HAITI, AND PROVIDE US WITH LEVERAGE FOR ENCOURAGING THE
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AFFECTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT WE AND
OTHER INTERNATIONAL DONORS BELIEVE NECESSARY.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: I WOULD APPRECIATE A REPLY TO THIS
MESSAGE BY COB APRIL 5. ANYTHING WE COULD DO WOULD BE GRATEFULLY
RECEIVED, OF COURSE, PARTICULARLY IF IT COULD BE MADE KNOWN
IN EASTER WEEK.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 03-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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From: PORT AU PRINCE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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